

THE

HISTORIAN

OF HANCOCK COUNTY

Bay Saint Louis, Mississippi

April 2007

APRIL HAPPENINGS

Our April luncheon will be held on Thursday, April 19, 2007, at noon at the Kate Lobrano House, 108 Cue Street. The speakers will be Karen Ruhr, Assistant to the Circuit Clerk, and Caroline Adam and Gary Gilmore, Election Commissioners. Join us for a great lunch and wonderful company. Please call for reservations by noon on April 18, 2007, at 467-4090 because seating will be limited. The price of the lunch is \$7.00 payable at the door. A very special thank you goes to Prima Luke, our luncheon chef, for the delicious jambalaya last month.

TRIP TO NOMA

At the March luncheon, society member Sheila Cork of the New Orleans Museum of Art distributed information about the exhibit "Femme, Femme, Femme" currently on display. Interest was so high that member Doris Muniz has scheduled a tour of the exhibit through Gulf Coast Transportation. Please see the company's ad on page 9 for further details.

**THE HANCOCK COUNTY
HISTORICAL SOCIETY
P. O. BOX 3356
BAY ST. LOUIS, MS. 39521**



Ford's Fort
Home of John Ford

FORD'S FORT

By
Russell B. Guerin

Believed to be the oldest house in the Pearl River valley, the John Ford house, also known as Ford's Fort, figures very prominently in early Mississippi history. It was built in 1800 as the home of a distinguished pioneer who had chosen a site on what was known as the Federal Road. The Pearl River flows close by.

The nearest village is

Sandy Hook, on Highway 35, south of Columbia, and just north of the state line. The house itself can be reached by way of a county road, and so it is a good idea to have directions in advance if one should plan to visit.

Besides being a farmer, John Ford was a preacher who held regular services at his church and encouraged his slaves to attend. He was also a person of great influence in the Mississippi Territory; it was his home that was the meeting place in 1816 of representatives of fifteen counties who came to join forces in asking for Mississippi statehood. The

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OF HANCOCK COUNTY

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"TO PRESERVE THE GENERAL AND ARCHITECTURAL HISTORY OF HANCOCK COUNTY AND TO PRESERVE THE KATE LOBRANO HOUSE AND COLLECTIONS THEREIN; TO RESEARCH AND INTERPRET LIFE IN HANCOCK COUNTY; AND TO ENCOURAGE AN APPRECIATION OF AND INTEREST IN HISTORICAL PRESERVATION."

**PRESIDENT'S
MESSAGE**

Recently I had the pleasure of attending the grand opening ceremonies of two of the Bucks County, Pennsylvania, post-Katrina projects. The first was the new childcare center on Highway 603, and the other was our Tercentennial Park on the beach. We at the Society really owe these folks from Pennsylvania a sincere debt of gratitude. They have gone all out for Hancock County.

In addition to giving the Society some much needed financial assistance, they have really put a new face on Tercentennial Park. At the ceremony I must have said, "Thank you," one hundred times. I would now like to say, it one more time. *Thank you, Bucks County!*

We have made some progress with the repairs. A contractor has been selected, and we are waiting for him to begin. I suspect that when things get started they will go pretty fast.

A few weeks ago Jack and I had the pleasure of previewing the NOMA exhibit "Femme, Femme, Femme." It is really wonderful. I have been back to the museum twice more, each time appreciating the exhibit more and more. Our former board member, Doris Muniz, has scheduled a bus trip to see this most worthy exhibit. I believe that it is scheduled for May 24. You would be wise to reserve a seat on the bus NOW!

I hope to see you all at the luncheon.

Melinda

**FEMME, FEMME,
FEMME
IS FAB, FAB, FAB!**

A generous gift to the New Orleans Museum of Art and New Orleans, "Femme, Femme, Femme: Paintings of Women in French Society from Daumier to Picasso from the Museums of France" features eighty-three works by a wide range of artists, including Degas, Toulouse-Lautrec, Manet, and Renoir.

The image of the French woman excites an undeniable interest in America, an interest that has never waned. This image is the focal point of the exhibit which opens with the familiar routines of motherhood and closes with the celebration of the emerging independence of the modern woman.

The exhibition runs from March 4—June 3, 2007. Please visit the NOMA web page at www.noma.org or telephone 504-658-4100 for more information.

(Continued from p. 1)

representative from Hancock County was Thomas Anderson.

Although the Federal Road consisted of a cleared strip with a few wagon ruts, the Ford place was strategically placed. In 1814, when General Andrew Jackson marched his army toward New Orleans to confront the British invasion, he took the high ground along that road. After crossing the Pearl, he elected to rest for a short period at the Ford house. A story is told that the Reverend Ford allowed Jackson to occupy the main bedroom only after the general committed not to use profanity in the house.

Ford is recorded to have had thousands of acres and hundreds of slaves on a plantation that straddled the 31st parallel demarcating Mississippi and Louisiana. He chose the Mississippi side for his home because he wanted his slaves to learn to read and write, which was con-

trary to Louisiana law at the time.

The house is indeed an imposing structure even today. To have built it two hundred years ago from available raw materials with slave labor was certainly the stuff of real pioneer courage. It is not without a feeling of awe that one walks those acres in present day.

The house is still sturdy, but beginning to show its age. It has a brick ground floor with a weather-boarded second level above. Giant chimneys flank the sides while a veranda over-

looks the field.

The remains of a large dugout rest below. Some of the lower rows of bricks, made from local clay by slave labor, have partially crumbled into red dust. The bottoms of the chimneys have been cemented over, and some of the weather boards are loose, but still the hand-hewn timbers show their axe marks and invoke a certain reverence.

The appearance is one of strength, and it is evident that care is given to this piece of Mississippi history. It is sometimes open to visitors for a nominal fee, but arrangements should be made in advance. A call to Marion County at 601-444-0202 is suggested.

THOMAS ANDERSON HANCOCK COUNTY'S REPRESENTATIVE TO THE CONVENTION FOR STATEHOOD

*From Louisiana's Loss,
Mississippi's Gain*
by Robert G. Scharff

Edited by Eddie Coleman

On October 29, 1816,
delegates from [fifteen] counties



Dugout at John Ford's house in Marion County, MS.



Back porch of Ford's Fort

of the Mississippi Territory assembled at John Ford's house on the Pearl River, in Marion County, for the purpose of "conferring on the subject of admission of the Mississippi Territory into the Union, as a free, sovereign and independent state..." (Carter, 1937B*). Hancock County's representative, Thomas Anderson, was appointed to serve on a committee to draft and report on a petition to the United States Congress, "praying that the Mississippi Territory be admitted into the Union as a free, sovereign and independent [s]tate, with her present limits."

The following morning, after the completed petition was read several times to the assembled Convention, a motion was made to amend the document by changing the request for admission into the Union "without division" to admission [s]ubject to division by a line running up the middle of Mobile Bay and Mobile [R]iver, to the confluence of the Tombigby and Alabama [R]ivers; thence along the dividing ridge

between the waters of said rivers on a direction to intersect the southern boundary line of the state of Tennessee,...and for the east and west divisions produced by such line to be respectively erected into states as soon as each division shall contain thirty-five thousand inhabitants."

Anderson was one of only four delegates who voted for the amendment. The others were also from counties along the Pearl River. Later that afternoon, the convention voted once again, this time for the petition itself, without the amendment. The same four Pearl River counties were the only ones who voted against it. Their delegates received permission to enter the following protest in the Journal of the Convention: "We, the delegates of Lawrence, Pike, Marion, and Hancock counties, conceive it a duty we owe our constituents, to protest against the memorial as received and adopted by the majority of this convention, praying for our admission with our present limits."

Anderson also voted against a motion to elect a special delegate from the Mississippi Territory to promote the objectives of the convention. The motion passed, however, [ten] to [five].

He was then appointed to a committee to draft an address to the citizens of those counties not able to send representatives to the convention, sending them a copy of the petition developed by the convention and recommending that each of these counties hold meetings to aid the convention's purpose.

The Territorial Legislature authorized a census in the fall of 1816 for the purpose of showing that the Territory was eligible for admission into the Union. The Secretary of the Territorial Legislature estimated the population of Hancock County to be 1000, assuming 666 to be white and 334 to be black.

*Carter, Clarence E. and Bloom, John P. (1937B). Territorial papers of the United States, vol. VI; Mississippi Territory. Washington. GPO.

Editor's note: I have searched our files for information on Thomas Anderson, but have not been successful. Since Hancock County originally comprised present-day Hancock and Harrison Counties and parts of Pearl River and Stone Counties, Mr. Anderson could have lived in any of these areas and still represented Hancock County at the Convention held at John Ford's house. If any of our readers has further information, please contact the Historical Society at 228-467-4090 or P. O. Box 3356, Bay Saint Louis, MS 39521 so we can add this information to our files.



Banana plants among the trees —the Jermyn Collection

The Rededication of Tercentenary Park

By
Eddie Coleman

The rededication of Tercentenary Park was held at 2:00 P. M. on Tuesday, March 13, 2007. Charles Gray, Executive Director of the Hancock County Historical Society, served as Master of Ceremonies. He introduced Nancy Bergere of Doylestown, Pennsylvania, who served as the chairwoman of the Tercentenary Park restoration committee. Also in attendance were other representatives of the Bucks-Mont restoration group including Eric Fleischer and Normandy Gack who completed the committee headed by Mrs. Bergere.

Mike Kline of Delaware College represented the students

who had spent their vacation time doing the major clean-up and re-planting work in the park. To commemorate their work, he placed an imprinted brick in the walkway. Mike plans to return with the student volunteers after his graduation to help finish the work they began in January.

Mr. Gray also recognized Melinda Richard, President of the Historical Society, who spoke briefly thanking the volunteers for their tireless efforts. Other honored guests were Josh Coyne, representing Hancock Bank, members of the Hancock County Board of Supervisors, members of the Bay Saint Louis City Council, and members of the Board of Directors of the Hancock County Historical Society.

Music was provided by the Mississippi Coast Jazz Society, and Father Sebastian of St. Rose de Lima Catholic Church gave the invocation.



Pictured left to right Erik Fleischer, Normandy Gack, and Nancy Bergere



Melinda Richard and Charles Gray



Mike Kline of Delaware College

SNAPSHOTS FROM THE RE-
DEDICATION CEREMONY



*At right—
members
of the
Hancock
County
Board of
Supervi-
sors,
Histori-
cal Soci-
ety
Board of
Direc-
tors, and
other dignitar-
ies*



Above and below— crowd at the ceremony



*At right— Charles Gray
looks on as Josh Coyne
of the Hancock Bank
makes remarks at the
rededication*



*Representatives of Bucks-
Mont restoration group*



Mississippi Coast Jazz Society



Father Sebastian



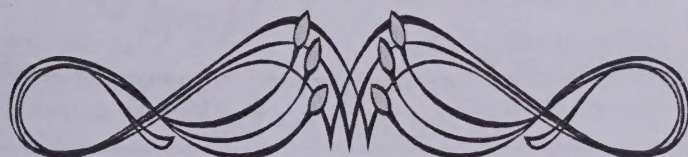
Amateur fishermen at Bay St. Louis, MS.

from the *Jermyn Collection*

The caption reads "Amateur fishermen at Bay St. Louis, MS." Can anyone help identify these men?



Detail from picture at left



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Elise Blackwell— *The Unnatural History of*
Cypress Parish

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2:00—4:00 P. M.
Kit Wohl— *New Orleans Classic Desserts*

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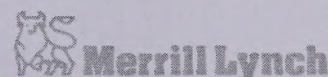
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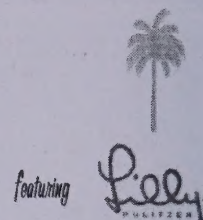
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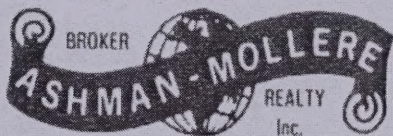
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Saturday, April 28— Bellingrath Gardens, Theodore, AL—\$38
River cruise aboard the *Southern Belle* available for \$18. Leave
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Women in French Society

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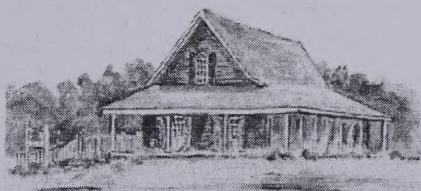
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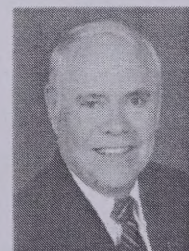
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